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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 04 KATHMANDU 000180

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SA/INS AND DS/IP/NEA
STATE ALSO PLEASE PASS USAID/DCHA/OFDA
USAID FOR ANE/AA GORDON WEST AND JIM BEVER
MANILA FOR USAID/DCHA/OFDA
LONDON FOR POL/REIDEL
TREASURY FOR GENERAL COUNSEL/DAUFHAUSER AND DAS JZARATE
TREASURY ALSO FOR OFAC/RNEWCOMB AND TASK FORCE ON TERRORIST
FINANCING
JUSTICE FOR OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL/DLAUFMAN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PHUM PTER CASC PGOV NP IN

SUBJECT: NEPAL: UPDATE ON MAOIST ACTIVITIES, JAN 25-31

REFERENCE: (A) KATHAMNDU 0175
(B) KATHMANDU 0140
(C) KATHMANDU 0145
(D) KATHMANDU 0135

SUMMARY

1. The Government of Nepal (GON) and the Maoists announced a ceasefire on January 29 (Ref A). The international community widely welcomed the news of a ceasefire. The Maoist-aligned All Nepal National Independent Students Union-Revolutionary (ANNISU-R) said that it will go ahead with their planned education strike despite the ceasefire. Prior to the ceasefire announcement, the week got off to a brutal start after Maoists gunned down Krishna Mohan Shrestha, Inspector General of Police, his wife and a sub-inspector, causing fear and outrage throughout Nepal (Ref B). Maoists also killed seventeen security personnel, including six police and six Armed Police Force (APF) personnel. Two civilians were killed in the same attack. Maoists abducted thirty-six students from a secondary school, and thirty-six villagers. The Royal Nepal Army (RNA) is planning to increase its troop strength to help combat the insurgency. In an effort to correct human rights violations, the Government of Nepal announced plans to compensate the families of those killed by errant security forces. The army also announced court-martials for those found guilty of killing innocent civilians (Ref C). Amnesty International expressed concern again over the human rights situation in Nepal.

CEASE-FIRE ANNOUNCED; LEADERS CAUTIOUS

2. The Government of Nepal (GON) and the Maoists declared a ceasefire on January 29. The GON agreed to remove the terrorist label, withdraw red corner notices from Interpol and remove rewards for intelligence on top Maoist leaders (Ref A). Narayan Singh Pun, Minister For Physical Planning and Works, was designated by the government as its peace talks coordinator.

3. The United States and the international community welcomed the news of the ceasefire. England, Germany, Finland, India and the EU Heads of Mission all expressed support for the ceasefire and hope that it would lead to a peaceful resolution.

4. GON officials remain cautious. Ramesh Nath Pandey, Minister for Information and Communication, was quoted in local papers as saying that "peace talks will begin soon," but Narayan Singh Pun, Minister for Physical Planning and Works, cautioned that the hard part was just beginning. Pun said there was no definite time frame for when the peace talks would begin, and that it was a delicate process that should be taken one step at a time.

5. Dadhi Raj Lamichhane, one of the Maoist mediators, said the Maoists were committed to the ceasefire and told local reporters that if anyone from either side violated the ceasefire they should be branded as "traitors."

EDUCATION STRIKE TO GO ON

6. The All Nepal National Independent Students Union-Revolutionary (ANNISU-R), the Maoist-aligned students organization, said it will not cancel its plans for the upcoming educational strike. ANNISU-R threatened to close all educational institutions, indefinitely, beginning February 13 if the GON does not meet its 13-point demands, which include free education and an increase in school budgets.

7. ANNISU-R issued a statement on January 30 that if the GON did not sit down for talks, it would turn schools

throughout the country into "focal points of agitation." ANNISU-R said it would go ahead with the strike despite the ceasefire declared by the Maoist leadership.

BRUTAL MURDER OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

18. Krishna Mohan Shrestha, Inspector General of the Armed Police Force, his wife and bodyguard were gunned down while walking outside their home on the morning of January 26 (Ref B). Shrestha is the highest-ranking security official to be killed since the start of the Maoist insurgency. The Government of Nepal condemned the murders, calling them disgraceful and cowardly and asserting that they showed the true face of the terrorists to the world. Prime Minister Lokendra Bahadur Chand said the murders would not deter security forces in their fight against the Maoists.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL ATTACKS NEPAL AGAIN

19. Amnesty International (AI) issued a statement on January 24 expressing serious concern about the worsening human rights situation in Nepal. The statement comes on the heels of a report that security personnel rearrested Janak Prasad Adhikari, a suspected Maoist, soon after the Supreme Court ordered his release (Ref C). AI declared that not enough was being done to stop human rights violations.

110. The Government of Nepal said it would compensate the families of two boys killed by security forces in Myagdi District in December. The two boys, age 14 and 23, were killed while returning home after taking their grandfather for treatment for rheumatism. According to press reports, security forces insisted the boys were killed unintentionally as a result of a crossfire. The GON said each family would receive just over 1200 dollars.

111. Madan Prasad Aryal, Defense Secretary, was quoted in the local press as declaring that the army is committed to honoring human rights and will punish those who are found guilty of violations. Aryal, speaking at a local conference, said that the army personnel implicated in the killing of five innocent youths in Nuwakot District in November are being court-martialed (Ref C). Aryal, however, denied that any army officers were involved in the alleged rape of two girls in Nepalgunj District, declaring, "No case of rape took place inside the barracks."

PEOPLES WAR TAKING TOLL ON SECURITY FORCES

112. According to an internal report, figures released on January 25 by the Terrorism Control Section of the Police Headquarters show that Maoists have killed 985 police officers, injured almost 1400 others, and abducted almost 300 officers. In addition, Maoists have destroyed countless police posts and stolen 800,000 dollars in cash and goods from the police. According to the local press, an unnamed high-ranking officer was quoted saying that officers fear for their lives in Maoist-infested areas and that the police force is suffering physically and psychologically because of the insurgency.

113. The Royal Nepal Army had also suffered losses due to the insurgency. Madan Kumar Aryal, Defence Secretary, said that 244 soldiers had been killed and 363 had been injured since the start of the Maoist "Peoples War."

INSURGENTS CONTINUE ATTACKS

114. Heavy fighting between security forces and Maoists along the border of Baglung and Pyuthan Districts claimed the lives of five policemen. The policemen had been missing since the clash began on January 27. Their bodies were discovered several days later. The battle continued even as the announcement of a ceasefire was made on January 29. Maoists, aiming at an Army helicopter in Surkhet District, shot and killed two civilians, including a young girl, on January 27. The civilians were part of a mass meeting organized by the Maoists, who demanded that each household in the district send at least one person to the meeting. Maoists killed a retired policeman on January 26 in Bara District. He was taken from his home, tied up and then shot. The Maoists killed a police officer in Ilam District on January 23, after dragging him from his house and slitting his throat. The officer had gone home on leave to visit his ill father. On January 24 a landmine blast, planted by Maoists, exploded in Surkhet District, killing five Armed Police Force (APF) personnel and injuring seventeen others. In Dang District, another member of the APF was also killed in a landmine blast. He was part of a team of security personnel assigned to guard a communications tower. Five security personnel were killed and 31 injured in Nepalgunj District after an ambush by

Maoists on January 24.

MAOISTS STILL ABDUCTING STUDENTS

15. Maoists stormed into a classroom in Palpa District and abducted 36 students from a secondary school. Their whereabouts are still unknown. Meanwhile, the students abducted from northwestern Rolpa District, taken on January 23, remain captive. Maoists reportedly took the children as part of a Maoist training program in which the students are forced to do road construction and farm work.

16. According to the local press, a group of armed Maoists abducted 36 villagers in the middle of the day from Dang District, ordering them to go with the Maoists to fight. Four managed to escape, and fled to India.

17. Maoists abducted a civilian from Dang District on January 24, accusing him of being an informant. He has not been released. A Royal Nepal Army (RNA) soldier, taken by the Maoists while guarding the Khimti Hydro-Power Project (Ref D), sent a letter appealing for his life. The insurgents allowed the soldier to send a letter to local human rights activists, in which he begged for help to be returned home safely.

18. Maoists in Kailali District are forcing families of security personnel to vacate their houses, after which they are locked. The families are also prevented from leaving the village, leaving them with nowhere to live but unable to get out of the district. According to local press reports, the Maoists have locked up approximately 200 houses, forcing the families to set up tents in their yards or take refuge with neighbors.

PLANS TO BEEF UP SECURITY

19. Madan Kumar Aryal, Defense Secretary, told the local press that the Government of Nepal (GON) is planning to increase the number of personnel in the Royal Nepal Army (RNA) from 60,000 to 66,000 in an effort to strengthen the force in its fight against the Maoists.

20. In a separate report, the local press said that armed security forces were to be stationed along the Nepal-India border following reports that the Maoists are using the area to smuggle in contraband, including weapons. The security force had been removed from the Koilabus post, which is only 34 kilometers from the Maoists' Dang District training center, after the Maoists attacked it in December.

MALINOWSKI